

MINILESSON

CONNECTION

Remind children of the list they've made about How-To writing, then read another piece and ask them to check whether it matches those descriptors.

"Writers, remember at the end of yesterday's writing workshop, when you looked at your small moment story and at your How-To writing, you made this chart listing what you noticed about How-To writing?"

How To Writing

1. Tells what to do, in steps.
2. Numbers the steps
3. Has a picture for each step.

I'm going to read a piece of writing that a writer in another class wrote, and will you and your partner notice whether this piece of How-To writing has all these things?" (and I reread the above list).

"Ready?" I held up a book, reading the cover title: 'How To Play Kickball,' "The author of this book is Cooper Loyal." Then, turning pages, I read "Step 1--Make sure you make the teams. Step 2--When the ball comes, kick it. If someone catches you ball you're OUT! But if no one catches your ball you're safe!"

Fig. 2-1

Step 1--Make sure you make the teams.

Step 2--When the ball comes, kick it. If someone catches you ball you're OUT! But if no one catches your ball you're safe!

Step 3--When it is three outs go in the field to catch a ball.

Step 4--If you catch a ball the other person is out!

Step 5--Good catch. Thanks.

"Did this tell what to do, in steps? Thumbs up, or thumbs down. Did Cooper number the steps? Did he include a picture for each step?" The children agreed he had done these things.

Ask children to contrast the book *they'd* written the previous day to the list of descriptors, encouraging them to revise today so their book fits the bill as a How-To book.

"Right now, will you look at the book *you* wrote yesterday, and see if you already did the things on our chart, or if those are things you are going to do today." I gave them time to do this.

"Can I see a thumbs up for how many of you *already* put the first step, then the next, then the next in your first How To book?" Many children gestured thumbs up that they had done this

already. "Today, you can fix up or finish yesterday's book, and write a new How To book! Who knows what you'll teach people to do today? Tell each other your ideas."

After a moment of buzz, I said, "Terrific. If I take your books home tonight, I'll learn how to make brownies and to play basketball and to ride a scooter and....to make a friend! I'm going to have a busy night!"

Sharing and mentioning a variety of kinds of How-To books helps. If you only highlight How-To books about sports, then you are more likely to see only sport books, and the same holds for other topics.

Name your teaching point.

"Today I want to teach you that when you write a How-To book, there are *new* things to do (and I gestured to the How-To chart,) but it also helps to use some of the same *old* techniques you *already* learned from when you were writing stories. You *still* say what you are going to write across the pages--'touch and tell'--and you *still* draw the pictures, saying the words that go with a picture. Only this time, each picture and page is another step."

TEACHING

While writing a class text, demonstrate how to make a How-To text, first coming up with a topic, then saying each step while touching one page at a time, then sketching.

"Let's write a How-To book together, about something we all know how to do, so that we can practice touching and telling with How-To writing, because before now we only did that with stories. I was thinking that all of us know how to have a fire drill, because we had one just the other day. So let's get out How-To paper and remember that we first 'touch and tell,' only this time we are telling what to do, in steps. Watch how I 'touch and tell' the first steps of a fire drill and then you can 'touch and tell' the next steps."

I put my hand on my chin and pondered for a moment. "I better first remember how the fire drill goes." I looked up in the air, pulling a memory from the sky, and then, as I recalled the sequence silently to myself, I registered each step on another finger. I took hold of an enlarged chart paper booklet, touched the first page and dictated-in-the-air "How to Have a Fire Drill." Then I touched the next page and said, "Step one... When the bells ring, it is time for a fire drill." Moving to the next page, I said, "Step two... Then you get your jacket and get on line."

It's helpful to use the expression in your voice, as well as gestures to emphasize the language, "Step one... step two..." Putting the emphasis on this language will help your children hear and understand that this type of writing is different than writing a narrative.

Debrief. Name what you just did as a writer.

"Writers, did you see how I named the first steps in the fire drill, just touching the page and telling what I would write on that page? I used 'touch and tell,' just like we used that strategy for small moment stories."

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Invite writers to add the last couple of steps to the class How-To book, writing in the air on imaginary booklets.

“Writers, it’s your turn now to try doing the same for a few of the steps. Can you tell your partners what could be the next steps that you can add to our How To Have a Fire Drill book? Partner A, pretend you are holding a booklet and turn the pages back to the very, very start of your imaginary booklet.” I waited. “Are you on the title page? Starting with the title, tell all the steps, including the ones we just said and then keep going, past where I stopped....do all the steps til you get to the class standing outside, okay? Partner A, hold your imaginary booklets, point to the cover, and start!

As I approached Sofia, she was saying to Preston, “Step four...You walk outside and line up across the street.”

To the whole class, I said, “Once you’ve ‘touched and told’ up to the part where the class is outside, pass the imaginary booklet to your partner and let Partner B give the steps for coming back inside.”

Preston pretended to touch the page and said, “Next...listen for the whistle and come back in the school.” I moved quickly to listen in to other partnerships.

LINK

Remind writers that after rehearsing the entire booklet, they go back to page one, sketch and write.

“Writers, when you are writing, after you touch and tell the pages, you will want to go back to page one, and touch that page, say the words to yourself, and then draw the picture for that step. Remember, as you draw the picture, it helps to say in your mind what you will write!”

I wrote “1” in the box at the top of the first page and then quickly made a sketch for the first step, saying the words as I did this, and then quickly wrote the words.

“Writers, we all just worked on How to Have A Fire Drill together, but does that mean that you all have to write a How-To book about fire drills? No! Of course not! You can write a book that teaches people to do anything you know how to do. Thumbs up if you have your idea for what you will teach in today’s How-To book.” The children signaled. “Thumbs up if you are ready to ‘touch and tell’ your own How-To book across the pages?” Again, most signaled yes. “Fantastic. There are new booklets waiting for you in baskets at each of your tables.(Some of you may still need to finish yesterday’s book, so do that first. As soon as you get back to your writing spot, you can get started! Off you go.”